

Cultural Museum Policy

The topic of *Ethnological Research* that addresses the current changes in ethnographic museums is an occasion for recapitulating these starting concepts of ethnography and museums in the circumstances of new discussions about local communities, collective cultural creations and their museum affiliations. Many of them have been strengthened due to the operational needs of the new global conservation category of intangible cultural heritage, while some of them have started with such reasons in important innovative conventions even earlier. Social power relations and a focus on cultural research are the main measures of progress in this institutional work, as well as in other related disciplines. Their convergence is obvious already due to the transformation of the collective object into a group-recognizable individual subject and partner in research and presentation work.

Responding to the editorial invitation by *Ethnological Research* to dedicate the next issue to today's changes in ethnographic museums upon the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the beginning of the publication of this journal by the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, I am first reaching for the definitions of museum and ethnography. What could be referred to as a museum due to the broadening of the term has even been a scandal in the global professional association in recent years. The social, political and technological inclusiveness of the world in which a museum label from an exhibition or an online open catalogue record from a metropolis can be corrected through social networks by a peasant from the other side of the world, perhaps even an immigrant following a *hashtag* from a tour of the exhibition, as well as the locals by remembering what an object means in the long or short durations of its community – all this has shaken the profession no less than the time when new navigational and colonisation achievements began filling the museum cabinets with eye-catching handicrafts.

The debates and retreats from the new definition could have reminded of the discussions of the previous generation of experts by whom the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was formulated, with laconic comparisons of how the poor part of the world has now received its UNESCO List. Can a museum be a social undertaking devoid of a representative building or without any building at all? Can the space of workshop programmes itself be referred to as a museum? Wouldn't they then be more reminding of South Korean "heritage centers" (Dronjić 2017: 17, Yang 2003: 48), whose content is more similar to European folklore festivals? Which side of the street are we on then, in the Zagreb Ethnographic Museum or in "Lado" folk dance ensemble? In such changing circumstances, what could be useful curation skills?

INTRODUCTION

Nevertheless, irrespective of all these adaptations to the spirit of the times, the concept of museum remained attractive enough for the domestic political champion of the sovereignist orientation to point it out at the time of writing this article as a token of programmatic determination, even conditioning the survival of the government on the establishment of a new museum¹. Does the future of museums lie in such changing political agendas? As a matter of fact, I would agree, but let me argue in favour of such an unpopular position. The answers could be clearer if we continue following the path of the initial definitions. Instead of the current redefining of museums by ICOM, I am opening a manual for the establishment of new museums, whose first chapter is titled "Museums and Their Communities". It concludes with the sentence that with the abundance of their storage facilities "all they have to do is connect them with the people of the present, because the future of the museum depends on the depth and authenticity of such a connection, which is as important, morally and intellectually, as the authenticity of the objects themselves" (Lord and Lord 2001: 37).

In the second approach to the definition, from the ethnographic aspect ("ethnographic" should strictly concern ethnographers), I turn the pages of the editorial introduction to the four-volume edition of "Ethnography", which in the past generation of researchers brought together about a hundred of the most relevant professional papers up to that time. After a series of the most famous definitions, the editor arranged their key parts in this way:

"Ethnographers immerse themselves in the researched society / for the purpose of field collection of descriptive data / about the culture of its members / by seeing the meaning they attach to their environment / presenting the collected knowledge understandable and significant both to other scientists and to the wider readership." (Bryman 2001: X)

The publisher of this edition also publishes the journal "Ethnography", which does not write about ethnographic museums. In addition, the only republished ethnographic book in Croatia written exclusively through ethnography (starting from the initial book, not from the collection of professional papers) was written by a sociologist, that is "Torcida" by Dražen Lalić (1993 and 2011)². It is difficult to imagine football fans in an ethnographic museum, which seems like a joke until one realises how such an exhibition on fisheries coincided with one of the fishermen's protests over the harmonisation with EU regulations – and that today's fishermen did not feel the urge to convene for an agreement or a press conference in its space, precisely among the descriptions of Petar Lorini whom we can imagine as a pre-EU commissioner for fisheries in his time.

The difficulty of ethnographic museums in keeping up with the present from the previously mentioned definition of ethnography (Antoš 2010: 118-126) seems like a curse in which the key part is misidentified, like that ancient imploring formulation about wood and stone – as a curse for hitting both or as an intercession for dodging them.

A stone placed in the crucial background of antiquarian ethnography is the founder of public

1 At the time of the formation of the new national government, the junior coalition partner of the sovereignist profile emphasised the opening of the museum as one of the preconditions for support (Devčić 2024).

2 Don Frane Ivanišević's answers to Antun Radić's questionnaire have been published as a collection of articles several times (1903, 1987 and 2006), while the ethnological studies of Dunja Rihtman Auguštin on Christmas (1992 and 1995) and Zoran Čiča on witchcraft (2002 and 2023) have also seen two editions.

museums, i.e. politics. Museums are one of the most important places for authenticating cultural programmes of political projects, and by the nature of the functioning of machines and the markets of their products, which transformed the world the century before the last, the most important such project is the nation-state. In the political penchant for glittering museum openings, curator is the one hoping for a programme partnership (Segalen 2005: 311). A small test of the example from the beginning of this text can be the politician's choice of a museum rather than a presentation centre, irrespective of the extent in which they meet the needs of the receptive tourist market. A greater test would be to weigh to what extent local ethnographic exhibitions represent the cultural practices of their communities, and to what extent they are just ambientalised models of national denominators, even in those environments where national programmes were fed by models of originality.

In the heritage regime and cultural policies, ethnography practiced in this way is not an exception, but only one of the more massive ways of attributing originality. When they find a place in mass rapture, crocheted doilies have the power to evoke rapture across the nation with a rural ambientalisation – even though this handicraft technique is historically younger than the steam engine and spread out from the cities³. Probably only the language has a greater mobilising power among the vernaculars, where experts often used to be comfortable in the roles of purist preachers. If local dialects are also intangible cultural heritage, such a cultural heritage had no place in the national reach of radio instruction on the correct speaking of the Croatian language. A more appropriate comparison can be provided by experts firmly holding the seat in front of the microphone, at no time allowing language creators such as writers in front of it.⁴ In ethnography, a parallel to this would be the retention of the right to an exclusive interpretation of the meaning of an object or cultural practice, interrupting anyone if they stop to testify to something, even if they were from that very environment. Both to their benefit and to ours, as curators, such times have passed – as the curators exclaimed in the title of a recent museum collection (Adair et al., 2011). History is at the forefront among other sciences in which relaxed adherence to methodology coupled with mass reception always reinvents new meanings of heritage and the past, also forming a part of the same ideological programme that burdens ethnography in museum corridors.

In this way, the antiquarianisation of museum ethnography brings good and bad news. It is certainly good news that the ideologies of the nation-states of industrial societies have produced plethora of sciences capable of perfecting over time, and hence folklore research has emerged in the same momentum as the periodisation of archaeology. The bad part is its stumbling upon the ahistorical background, according to which lexicon sketches on cultural phenomena from the end of the 19th century still appear as parts of the entries on the prehistoric period.⁵ When only ancient roots and preservation for future generations are held to be important to something, the

3 Crocheted handicrafts stood out as the Croatian participant at the Eurovision Song Contest 2024 strived to evoke the rural ambience.

4 Before the adoption of the more fluent, radiophonic concept of the show “We speak Croatian” in 2019, in such three-minute pieces of usage advice, one could hear literal reprimands of the population in different occasions for using the wrong words, presenting science as a secular cult of monoglossia. Examples and analysis are provided by Starčević 2016.

5 The transformation of the landscape stands out in the industrial wave of strengthening cultivation and consumption, as the artisanal premise of the emergence of Frykman’s “creators of culture”, in whose bourgeois salons both collections of objects and scientific disciplines were created. Typical landscape forms are implicitly associated with prehistory.

present disappears from the definition of scientific interest. In this way, the politics of memory are transformed into regulatory regimes. The mobilisation potential of nation-states is unparalleled, for better or for worse, as we are reminded with each new football championship. With such an outreach, it is possible to raise the nation to its feet to house the family of the burned or to save a seriously ill child, when the state fails to do so. It is less encouraging to see when such ventures, national treasures or inscriptions in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity start to be counted as the result on the football scoreboard. The burden of such a heritage regime (Bendix et al. 2013) on the previous definitions of ethnography is broken in the scope of society and community.

MUSEUMS, ETHNOGRAPHY AND POLITICS

The general emergence of museums as storage sites for the spoils of war of invading empires, then open to indoctrinating the mass public of the new age with a global civilizational mission, already belongs to the museological reading (Bennett 1995). Within such a framework, the terms “ethnology” and “ethnography” were not coined for the first time because of the cultures on the shifting border of empires in Southeast Europe (Belaj 1998), but at the end of the 18th century by German professors employed by Russian rulers in St. Petersburg collections to organise knowledge about vast Eastern acquisitions (Vermuelen 2015). The high birth genesis under the imperial aegis is set apart by the globally innovated conservation category of intangible cultural heritage. At first, court masters from the Chinese T’ang epoch were regulated as “specially gifted craftsmen” under the tutelage of a high-ranking official referred to as the “Supervisor of Masters of Techniques” (Hucker 1985: s.v. “ming-tzi chiang”: 334; *ibid.* s.v. “shang-fang chien”: 407), and such a pattern was transformed by the modernized Japanese imperial court into masters of “folk art” according to the principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement (Brandt 2007).

The historical viaticum that easily catches the eye from there is political, but under the same guise there is also the one in which the market plays the crucial role. The works by Chinese court masters had only one buyer, with an imperial seal instead of an artistic signature, impressing passers-by how pointless it is to resist the authority with the ability to achieve such aesthetic achievements. In Europe, top craftsmen also worked for the rulers, but in an entrepreneurial competition, Brunelleschi succeeded in securing a state ban on copying his amphibious chariots for transporting marble blocks without a series of transshipments with a solution for the unprecedented scale of the dome of the Florence Cathedral (Fanelli 2004: 27). Such an artistic foundation of strictly individualised patent rights has forced today’s anonymised creators of marketable culture into a clinch from which UNESCO and WIPO (later the WTO) have still failed to extricate themselves since they began discussing intangible cultural heritage in the 1970s.

Nevertheless, market forces could not be escaped from, starting from the domain of cultural creativity with which forensic expertise finds the finesse of halftones and metrorhythmic patterns in the well-known court examples, as the procedural chronicle of the establishment of the global category of intangible cultural heritage begins with the global cover of the song “El Condor Pasa”. What became a precedent in textiles much later as the “carpet case”, forbidding a Vietnamese factory to mass produce carpets with motifs of Australian indigenous cultures because individual artists were behind the lawsuit rather than the civil services, has been known for generations in the eternally spilling over musical influences. Apart from the souvenirs, there is the only domestic regulated market of separately presented traditional culture. Individual choreographies of folk dances count on the collection of royalties and professionalised leaderships, while

associations of dancers of their own heritage have yet to apply for the annual competition of the relevant agency due to such adherence to collective intellectual property. Hence, someone may come into doubt while opting between a profitable profession with the addition of such a cashable hobby on the one hand and a rather uncertain future with an ethnological degree on the other. Certainly, such advice to one's own child would depend on the household inheritance, family support and the prospects of marriage, but in such a dilemma, the counselled person needs to marry culture. What kind of home could such a marriage settle in, when we have all already entered it as married into the wife's family?

In front of the home of ethnography, the market knocked on the door uninvited, also coming from cultural landscapes. The first collections and exhibitions of folk art in our cities were created by the effort of industrialists enthusiastic about the theses of the Arts and Crafts Movement, some of whom grew up as craftsmen on family distilleries, which, according to the new practices of the market, changed their landscape resources into what we would today refer to as traditional landscapes. Just as the Bolivian military government, by demanding global copyright of a famous song, wanted to see itself as the guardian of the national heritage and not as a transgressor of democracy, so fascist Italy exalted itself as a protector of beauty, establishing the first legal conservation of cultural landscapes in the manner of landscape sights. However, in such beauties, anonymous brushes are held by farmers. Where these new sights could be helped by their fame for the benefit of other local activities, such accompanying ventures by anonymous landscapers managed to alleviate the bitterness over the new prohibitions in order to keep the beautiful picture intact. In the cultivated rest, they had to wait for the time of long-haired hippies to turn public opinion in favour of ecological gains and consequent agronomic incentives to heal market deprivations.

Where the state rewards an individual choreographer for a new folk dance by regulation, the farmer earns such market compensation for his efforts with the label of individualised production. In the landscape, the choreographer is more akin to a teacher of the art of landscape construction, revealing the cacophony of the formative period of regulation: in front of the same structures, it is possible to meet the leader of the instruction prescribed by agronomic incentives, the listed holder of an intangible cultural property from the conservation registration, a member of the inner circle of a civil association dedicated to it, the curator of a museum collection linked with the landscape while leading a workshop on the International Museum Day under the global motto of the connection between museums and cultural landscapes, while in our country all that was preceded by a preschool teacher with spring parents' meetings to clean and repair the surroundings of the kindergarten – none of them anonymous, but again in the heritage, each individual with his or her own group identity.

In dealing with these heritage regulations, the museum depends on its founder also because of the building in which it is located. According to the founding mission of the museum, ethnographic museums, founded to present rural heritage, were located in the city centres. Steps outside the museum walls are so expensive that only the state can stand behind them in addition to the founders. Only it can afford a presentation luxury like an open-air museum with its curators. The market life of Colonial Williamsburg, with all the involved maintenance of not only the buildings but also the presenter's costumes, varies to such extent that the staff is accompanied by union discussions.

The Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb was striving to take a step beyond its walls with its Kumrovec project for decades (Gušić 1979, Đaković 2001) until in the mid-1960s it became

involved in the struggle for the political power of one party over another, agreeing to take part in the cultural legitimisation of a national leader deprived of a democratic mandate (Šuvar 2001: 474). By such a coincidence, the adoption of the Conservation Act with the prescribed determination of the state of cultural heritage documented the financial scale of this project, which placed a heavier burden on the budget than the item for all annual museum acquisitions in Croatia. The fact that the political moment stumbled on the museum profession in this study is shown by the obviously unupdated sectional assessment that the Croatian open-air museum has a place exclusively “in conjunction with some of our suitable medieval old towns or castles” (Gamulin 1969: 101). The political reasoning of cultural heritage as a representative cover of the state did not count on the encouragement of craftsmen necessary for the maintenance of the complex, so after the second political upheaval due to the repair of the roof before the announced state visit, such people had to find themselves across the border.

The art of maintaining valuable structures as intangible cultural assets remained on the shelves of magazines and conservation records in the 1960s, after the expertise of cultural landscapes and expert argumentation of intangible cultural heritage, because their regulation did not have political advocates. The market took care of determining the *de facto* first intangible cultural asset in Croatia, because in covering the cost of the agronomic study that defined the cultivation for the Dingač label, each of its buyers gave their small yield. In the same year, 1963, when the Agricultural Co-operative Potomje protected this rural intellectual property in Bern, a newly employed female conservator from Rijeka Beata Gotthardi Pavlovsky started with her land in Takala, and biologists protected the nature reserve of the wild olive grove in the area of Dudići in the same pasture where a female conservator would subsequently separately zone Dudići's drystone wall sheepfold within the established cultural landscape as the first such domestic conservation move outside the settlements. The extent to which such attributions of value were institutionally respected, primarily urbanistically and agronomically, was shown by the anger of the people of Lun after the sale and removal of two five-hundred-year-old olive trees in 2010 for the decoration of a new shopping centre next to the metropolis, because there was no benefit from the established status of a protected cultural landscape. It was possible to talk about protected cultural heritage as long as it did not require changes to binding regulations. When the time came for EU harmonisation, they could only remind us of the European reasons for the emergence of the largest part of the Adriatic cultural landscapes during the winemaking booms of the 19th century. On the one hand, the gigantic hand of the market loomed over the heritage, while with its limitations in the second half of the 1960s, the first domestic open-air museum opened based on a museum study following a factional showdown within the main one-party state (Šuvar 2001). Which choice is worse?

Once the national regulation of intangible cultural goods was established, its first proponents also came from the market, reminding like craftsmen of the distant historical cradle of intangible cultural heritage. The first listings of intangible cultural goods in the Register of Cultural Goods of Croatia were not initiated by conservators, but by craftsmen from the centre of Zagreb, like umbrella makers, and musical instrument makers, among others. Pressed by the opening of the market in the early 2000s with the arrival of foreign franchises and retail chains, they coveted them as a heritage label of excellence, which was the status of a traditional and artistic craft to facilitate rents in the business centre of the city. In such competitions of supply and demand, their position was not far from the farmers' accumulation of non-agricultural incentives to compensate for the time and effort invested in production below industrial dimensions. In 2014, agriculture itself was dressed in the guise of intangible cultural goods by including the

first four cultivations in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

As on a global level, there was history behind Croatian craftsmen and farmers. Like the competition for the favour of the lifetime state president in the turbulent 1960s, had it not been for the biological descent from the scene of the *de facto* lifetime state president of the newly independent Croatia, the developments in terms of cultural heritage would again take a different course, through regulation or informally. A cultural researcher may find interesting the Bausingerian moment of folklore and folklorism described since the 1960s, where crafts imported from European industrial centres are in the foreground. As food for thought for future curators as a visual sign of the city and a paradoxical element of the composition of folk costumes, one museum object has remained from there – an umbrella. Such a catalogue description becomes logical only when it is ascertained that the lavish embroideries of our national costumes were done using the cotton yarn picked by slave hands in the fields in the Southern United States, industrially spun and mercerised in order to reach the girls' hands in the preparation of dowry through the port of Trieste (Kale 2021: 120).

LOCAL COMMUNITY

Where in these interplays between politics and the markets are our strongholds from the initial definitions? When speaking about culture, their intersection is in the non-individualised, collective creations with which museums want to continue to be the chosen place of affirmation and thus confirm their social role to their founders. The political challenges of past generations in the post-candidacy years of the adoption of continental standards, routes, currency and integrated political representation are recognisable in the museum life of the recreational sunny zone of the continent, by a myriad of presentation or interpretation centres. These do not require restoration workshops because they do not have collections taken care of by curators, their staff is deprived of professional progress and they overlap with the destinies of seasonal precariats, and whatever is needed, from a museological synopsis to *edutainment*, can be ordered from external services. Each of these tasks is achievable in terms of time, as well as both in terms of competition and throughout the period of the term of office, so the enthusiasm of local politicians should not be surprising with them.

The museum and, in general, heritage transformation brought about by presentation centres does not stop only within such walls. New and renovated museums dedicated to important cultural practices that in their complexes did not provide for the required workshops and ambiances of their required crafts, choosing to send museum objects for restoration to centralised institutions so that the necessary professions can continue to be maintained only they have separated themselves from the principles of intangible cultural heritage and rather than cultural museums they have decided to be presentation centres of museum objects. These could not easily be renamed into culture museums. For our argumentative trajectory along the definitional demarcations, it is important to notice what is happening with the most important stakeholders in these places, because behind the exhibition labels in the presentation centres there are also museological synopses written by licensed curators.⁶

Such a parallel route in the protection of cultural heritage was emphasised by the incorporation of the conservation service into the state administration in 1997 and the monopolisation of

6 To find out more on interpretation centres, see Perinčić 2022.

titles, renouncing conservation licensing outside the service even when the profession was learnt under the mentorship of a conservation advisor in the Museum Documentation Centre (Laszlo 2016). In addition to the great restoration achievements of the profession, this also opened the door to the compromise of licensed studies by handicrafts, including the contradictory expertise of the same conservators, as could already be implied for different clients. During the writing of this text, the nadir of the domestic conservation profession represents the police search of the office of the chief state conservator. Would such sanctions and disgrace in the institutional care of cultural heritage from the previously mentioned earlier situations have occurred if the heads of heritage institutions had positioned themselves more in accordance with the theoretical achievements of their disciplines at the time, and less as confidants of democratically defective authorities? The latter nuances belong not only to the history of museum beginnings, but also to ordinary functioning from global metropolises downwards. A female researcher at the Paris-based Museum of Non-European Cultures, which, together with the Marseille-based MuCEM, was created by the dictated dissolution of two other national museums (Segalen 2005, Mazé 2013), recounts such a presidential order to change the holdings at the very opening of the exhibition (Price 2007: 168).⁷ The first conservation service in the world was created against the backdrop of the unexpected obligations of the subversive government, when after the regicide, it was left with castles and churches of the runaway nobility and clergy (Auduc 2008). After the renovation, Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa has become a research centre with continuous participation of someone from the addressed cultures, either as curators or through fellowship to analyse the documentation.

The most useful thing we can do from such stratification of cultural co-partnerships in this place is to draw attention to the creatively crucial tip of the triangle, which is otherwise made up of the state and experts. Here we are back to the creative collectives.

The culture of different collectives becomes noteworthy because of the meanings attached. Individual creators are monitored differently. From the wings of the museum, their oeuvres are curatorially monitored and come to fame with exhibitions with catalogues that later fill the shelves of auction appraisers. In Croatian ethnographic practice, we have had a case where the curator of a jewellery collection, who is also the author of such a monograph (Ivkanec 1985), after the museum started the programme of certified replicas, followed the work of a prominent goldsmith in the same way as curatorial colleagues do according to the programme of the Arts and Crafts movement – which in our country incepted the first ethnographic collection subsequently transferred to the new Ethnographic Museum (Ivkanec 2010). Is her accompanying manuscript expertise to be included in the writings of art history or among the documentation of intangible cultural property? From the curator's point of view, the choice tends to be inclined towards the place where the collection will be further explored, and new meanings will be determined. Nevertheless, in the first revision of the Working Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, in the part on the participation of local communities, it is recommended that signatory countries establish an “advisory body or harmonisation mechanism” with such countries that will define and register intangible cultural goods, develop and implement programmes, prepare national

7 The American cultural anthropologist ends the book about a museum that the professionals were not able to name, so it was named after a nearby bridge, by recalling the response of the President's Office that they could not help her with the information she asked for, but they were sending her an official photographic portrait of the President with his autograph (ibid.: 181).

applications and decide on the listing of intangible cultural goods previously included in the Representative List Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Chapter III.1, 2010).

Such a point of entry into the heritage regime is known by museum work with acquisitions as a purchase or gift, i.e. as a transfer of ownership rights over an object. In contrast to such an act, intangible cultural property, in addition to cultural practice, also represents collective intellectual property. Technological advances in gene sequencing and the early adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity also led to the corresponding debates about rural ownership of the results of local cultivations (i.e. over a trait and not a specific crop), but after the Nagoya Protocol in 2010, biopiracy subsided and corporate appropriations of the right to use locally conditioned genetic legacy had to take the form of business exchanges and contracts, rather than just pre-informed consent. As usual in culture, only a small part of the exchanges is monetary, so even here villages with plants with special resistance and commercial prospects could rarely reach an agreement on how much to pay which household, but everyone benefited from the contracted construction of roads, the installation of water supply or school fees for the younger generations. From the overlap of intangible cultural heritage with the preservation of biodiversity, an interesting terminological anecdote remained in the introduction by the biologists of the term “custodial communities” for local communities,⁸ while on the other hand, ethnologists in solutions such as the inclusion of the Mediterranean diet in the Representative List (of one corporate initiative) reached for the biological term “emblematic communities”, typical in research on the distribution of seaweed or insects. The difference between the custodial community and the emblematic community is evident in the fact that the latter is not expected to interfere in professional work – it is intended only for the transmission of traditions. The conventionally required form of informed prior consent of the local community, which in reality takes the form of a letter of support to the civil service also reminds of the inertia of the passive role of the object in determining the values attached to it.

CONCLUSION

In such circumstances, the museum holdings, as a source of authority for expert assessment, change their ethnographic life at a very slow pace. Reading the recent example of an expert evaluation of a folklore festival, which was proposed to the committee as a reminder and a model, one cannot escape the impression of being trapped between the pages of Naila Ceribašić's (2003) book on the concept of folklore festivals a century ago. The most common expression used in assessment is that something has been performed “duly” or “correctly”, no less than twice per unit of text. If originality were to be assessed in such a pedantic way, Mississippi slavery would have to be restored at the level of textile fibre processing at that time. At least since the Nara Document on Authenticity from 1994 onwards, such “correctness” would be disputed by the attitude of the community that for their needs towards the diaspora, youth, dignified aging, visitors or whoever, it is not crucial that the materials, forms or ornaments are identical to those from the museum, but they all agree that it is something that means more to them today. In establishing such relationships, the regulatory analyst does not see any perspective in typified “informed consent agreements”, which in museum practice is carried out through acquisition procedures, but in profiled agreements with collective creators (Lixinski 2013: 205-231, 2019: 85-88).

Museums are there to follow their creations in the way they did upon the beginning of

8 Custodial community for *sui generis* biological species.

industrialisation when they collected what at the time were innovative forms, which stood out from the production units in terms of handicraft. Both today and then, an important part of the formulation of creativity was hidden in the choice of consumers, and not only in mystified creation, followed by ethnographic rescue. Ethnography is a healing means of discerning what in museum acquisitions belongs more to the reconstruction of cultures of 19th century living, the burden of practicing a custodial programme that prefers a model of national affiliations to a picture of cultural peculiarities. Generations of folklore researchers after World War II had to deal with ahistoricised cultures because it suited politicians across Europe to remain silent about the forging of presentation practices and collaborations of the earlier period, thus marking the profession until the years of rethinking in the late 1960s, when the dilemmas of research methodology and ethics were introduced from the outside (Segalen 2005: 52-55, Lixinski 2019: 97). The retraditionalisation wave after 1990 coincided with the post-communist triumph of consumerism, but such was the social climate in the 1960s, when pop, comics, jeans, motorcycles and fast food sprang up at the same time as folklore festivals, ecomuseums and open-air museums. A pillar of cultural immateriality, such as *klapa* multipart singing, was inceptioned at the time together with domestic heavy metal, which is certainly closer to the recent entry of the Berlin techno-scene into the Representative List than to *ojkanje* (two-part singing). Which of their paraphernalia and memorabilia need to have their place in the museum?

Already in the formative period of ethnology, the elusive local community was challenging enough to exclude craftsmen, merchants, clerks, teachers (except as survey respondents) from it, while in today's struggle with definitions, in addition to all the related and close professions, it is most advisable to reach for – biologists! From there, they were first spurred on to an important debate by the pressure from technology and industry, much like the steam engine in its time provoked anti-modernist reactions such as respect for the countryside and handicrafts.

What the citizens of today need from culture has also led to the global category of intangible cultural heritage, exchange and appropriation of meaning in the ethical reversal of the instant visibility of the participants in such exchanges. Just as ethnography has influenced oral history, today exemplarily present since elementary school textbooks, so the anthropologisation of heritage has qualified such an intangible key for many locks far beyond disciplinary boundaries (Casini 2024: 64-74). In this dealing with words and culture, ethnographic museums with today's curatorial motto *Weltkultur* still have to travel along the route on which *Weltliteratur* was written at the time of the emergence of ethnology, in the meantime moving far away from local reflections without hesitation (Gillman 2010: 60).

In the interplay between museums and politics, the latter deserves the credit for the creation of the Sarr-Savoy report, which opens the door to such voices, even if that is for some other reasons. After all, this has been the case from the very beginning of safeguarding heritage. Among all these voices, the strength of the ethnographic from the initial definitions is that such an opening of space in museums happens to it while it is still alive. As the director of MuCEM said ten years ago at a lecture at the MDC, in their galleries one often wonders whether it is an ethnographic or an art museum.⁹ Perhaps in this way, the circle is closed with artists, meeting them again at the beginning of a new cycle of meanings.

9 Denis Chevallier, Zagreb, 15th October 2014. The director has been part of the expert discussions on the reorganisation of museums since the *Réinventer le musée* conference in 1997.

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